

Weekly Situation Report
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS)
May 6, 2003
From: Billy Causey

HOT TOPICS AND HEADS UP:

On April 27th, the rescued pilot whales were moved to "old swimming hole" area at MM 29 by stranding organization volunteers. The new location is part of the Coupon Bight Buffer Preserve, managed by Florida DEP. This site was chosen as a better area for the whales because deeper than Mariner's resort site. Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve Manager Alicia Stevenson has been working with CAMA and DEP permitting to iron out the legal aspect of using the buffer preserve. This process has in no way obstructed the rehabilitation of the whales. On April 28th Alicia volunteered with rescued whales from 4am-8am. Alicia reported that the whales are much more active than the day of the stranding (April 18th). Unfortunately, another of the rescued whales has died and they now working with five whales- all females.

UR Team OCEAN Coordinator Amy Massey attended the DEP's Dive Control Board meeting to discuss ongoing reciprocity for State divers under NOAA dive regulations.

Coupon Bight AP Mgr Alicia Stevenson participated on the panel at a public meeting led by Ft. Zachary Taylor State Park to address the issue of removing the non-native tree species and replacing them with native trees and day pavilions.

LR Manager Fritz Wettstein and Resource Specialist Lauri MacLaughlin are consulting and providing logistical support for Rick Morris, an OCEANA video documentary producer. The documentary will focus on cruise ship impacts and coral disease.

DEP Boating Safety officer John Nazzaro conducted DEP safe boating course for Marsha Colbert and Bob Carl at Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve.

LR Assistant Manager Robert Kamphaus and Damage Assessment specialist Russell Reardon participated in a conference call with Kim Barry at DAC to discuss navigation marking issues in FKNMS.

The Newfound Harbor restoration / enhancement project contract (federal side) has been awarded. Work is anticipated to start as early as the end of this week. LR staff will begin to stage materials at Sea Camp for the project. This was discussed on the USI-Radio Morning Magazine.

A Coral Reef Classroom was conducted in Key West on Monday, 28 April for students from Horace O'Bryant Middle School by contractor Kady Crist and LR Team OCEAN Coordinator John Nazzaro. Kady and John were assisted by Lower Region Maintenance Officer Skip Dwyer on a second Coral Reef Classroom on 5 May in Key West. Students from HOB School participated in the final Coral Reef Classroom for the Lower Keys Region this Spring. Field trips will resume in September.

Mary Tagliareni met with Laura Rossi of Booz Allen Hamilton about possible boat ramp sign locations. Laura is in the Keys this week to begin contacting the owners/managers of the sites and begin the permitting process.

Mary Tagliareni will participate in a US Coral Reef Task Force Outreach and Education Working Group conference call on Thursday, May 8.

Upper Region Manager, LCDR Dave Score, will be representing Billy Causey at the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group Meeting this week. Agenda items include update and discussion on the Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Program.

Mary Enstrom, NMS Volunteer Program Manager just returned from training staff in American Samoa and Hawaii on training volunteers, supervision and recognition of volunteers and the elements of effective volunteer programs. The first two participant's manuals are on NOAA's Intranet under "Volunteer Program Learning Center." The third course was piloted and revisions are currently being completed.

During the week of April 29, thank you cards for sanctuary volunteers were designed and submitted to the Intranet site for use by sanctuary staff.

Mary Enstrom matched up staff from Alpena, Michigan Community College with staff from American Samoa Community College to mentor the Samoan college in developing a volunteer service bureau for the country. Alpena has a very successful bureau that places volunteers around the community including at Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve. After the American Samoan bureau is established, it will provide assistance to staff at Fagatele Bay NMS.

A settlement was reached on a case against the captain of the fishing vessel "EL CHEVE" for violations of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act. The settlement for the fishery violation was for a total of more than \$21,400.00. The captain and crew of the "POINT MONROE" investigated the case that occurred in the Tortugas Sanctuary.

Lieutenant Bill Burns, of the Sanctuary Enforcement Team, and Officer Jason Reiff represented the FWC in a photo opportunity to show the agencies role in the cooperative effort to support safe boating in the Florida Keys. May is Safe Boating Month and representatives from the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Coast Guard, and City of Marathon Officials were present for the event. The photograph will be used for an upcoming newspaper article about safe boating.

High winds and heavy rains put a damper on any boating activities in the Special Enforcement Area. Some of Mother Natures residents were even driven from their homes after flooding rains covered many areas of the Keys. A six and a half foot alligator had enough of the rain and decided to dry out in front of a residence on

Sugarloaf Key. The property owner called the Monroe County Sheriff's Office and several Deputies arrived at the scene. Several neighbors also gathered around and were encouraging the deputies to shoot the gator. Officer Gordy Sharp was dispatched to the complaint and quickly determined that the gator was not being a nuisance, and simply needed to be relocated. From a scene right out of the Crocodile Hunter, Officer Sharp was able to get a noose around the gator, wrestle him to his patrol truck, and swiftly remove him from the hostile scene. The gator was relocated to an undisclosed safe location.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

News coverage: Ongoing coverage of the rehabilitation of the pilot whales and spotted dolphin that stranded. Ongoing coverage of bill passed by Florida legislature that would extend the deadline for phosphorous clean-up of water going to the Everglades.

Cheva Heck discussed the Technical Advisory Committee meeting on US I Radio's "Morning Magazine," Monday, May 5, 2003

Cheva Heck is working on an article on seagrass for Fly Fisher magazine and the script for a Waterways segment on the Queen of Nassau project. Cheva Heck completed a fact sheet on the latest round of grant awards under the Special Studies program.

COMMUNITY EVENTS:

CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Nothing to report.